



# Factsheet

## National Scrapie Eradication Program: Animal Identification and Recordkeeping Guide for Sheep and Goats

Scrapie is a fatal, degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of sheep and goats. There is no cure or treatment for scrapie. The National Scrapie Eradication Program, coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), has reduced the prevalence of scrapie in adult sheep sampled at slaughter by more than 99 percent. However, the cooperation of sheep and goat producers is needed to find and eliminate the last few cases in the United States.

Producers are required to follow federal and state regulations for officially identifying their sheep and goats. Producers must also keep herd records, showing what new animals were added and what animals left the herd/flock. This guide helps producers follow the regulations.

### How to Get Official Eartags

In response to feedback from and collaboration with the sheep and goat industry, the National Scrapie Eradication Program provides a limited number of free official ear tags to producers and other stakeholders. APHIS will provide up to 100 free, plastic tags to first-time participants in the sheep and goat identification program and metal serial tags at no cost to markets and dealers through fiscal year (FY) 2022. Producers who are not eligible for free tags or who prefer another type or color of tag can purchase official tags of their choice directly from approved manufacturers; see the "Approved Tag Manufacturers" section below for more information.

Visual tags (where the official identification (ID) must be read) and electronic tags (where the official ID can also be electronically scanned) are available. APHIS is working with sheep and goat organizations to transition toward electronic official identification to improve our nation's ability to quickly trace exposed and diseased animals in the event of an outbreak.

**To find out if you are eligible for the free tags and/or get flock and premises ID numbers assigned to your farms and flocks so you can obtain official tags, call 866-USDA-TAG (873-2824).** This number will direct you to the appropriate state or APHIS office that can help you. The scrapie eradication program pre-dates our Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) Program.

As a result, there have been changes in the premises ID numbers that may be assigned by the states and APHIS for sheep and goat premises to now include PINs and LIDs.

### Types of ID numbers:

**Premises ID:** ID permanently assigned to a **specific, identifiable geographic location**. Can include APHIS or state-assigned scrapie premises IDs, national Premises Identification Numbers (PINs), or state Location IDs (LIDs). Some premises may have more than one premises ID (i.e., they may have a scrapie premises ID AND a PIN or LID). **NOTE:** A PIN or LID is required to order electronic ID tags or implants (a historical scrapie premises ID cannot be used). In most states PINs and LIDs are assigned by the state office; contact information can be found at [www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/traceability/state-pin/state-pin](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/traceability/state-pin/state-pin) PINs contain seven alphanumeric characters, and LIDs contain six, seven, or eight alphanumeric characters.

**Flock ID:** ID assigned to a **group of sheep or goats** managed as a unit on one or more premises and under the same ownership. In most states, flock IDs begin with the state postal code. In some cases, the flock ID may be the same number as the scrapie premises ID.

## **Animals Requiring Identification**

The animals listed below are required by federal\* and/or state regulations to be identified as part of the National Scrapie Eradication Program before they enter interstate commerce or if ownership changes. Some states have ID requirements that are stricter than federal requirements, so the exceptions listed below do not apply in all states. For information on each state's ID and movement requirements, contact the State Veterinarian's office.

All sheep and goats must have official ID when moving off their premises of origin, EXCEPT\*

- Sheep or goats moving with a group ID and owner/hauler statement. This includes:
  - Sexually intact sheep and goats under 18 months of age in slaughter channels;
  - Sheep and goats of any age shipped directly to a slaughter establishment or a federally approved market that has agreed to act as an agent for the owner to apply official ID and when all the animals in a section of a truck are from the same flock of origin; or
  - Sheep or goats moved for grazing or similar management reasons without a change of ownership when the animals are moved from a premises owned or leased by the owner of the animals to another premises owned or leased by the owner of the animals. The premises must be recorded in the National Scrapie Database as additional flock premises and commingling must not occur with unidentified animals born in another flock or any animal not part of the flock.
- Castrated sheep or goats under 18 months of age.
- Sheep or goats moving within a state that have only resided on premises and in flocks in the same state and where the animals and premises are owned by persons who do not engage in the interstate commerce of sheep or goats and where the sheep or goats are of a class exempted from official ID by the state while in intrastate commerce.
- Sheep or goats moving within a state to a facility where the animals will be officially identified with official ID assigned to the owner.

## **Official Identification**

Official identification devices, including ear tags and injectable transponders, must be approved by APHIS as being sufficiently tamper-resistant for the intended use, have good retention, and provide a unique identification number for each animal.

An owner may substitute tattooing for an official identification device under certain criteria, which are explained in the "Tattooing" section on the next page.

## **Tips for Tagging**

- Sheep and goats only need to be officially identified when leaving the premises or when being sold to another owner.
- Do not buy or sell animals of any age that may be used for breeding, or animals over 18 months of age for any purpose, unless they are officially identified.

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\* *For more details on exemptions to the federal sheep and goat identification requirements, review the regulation at [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie)*

- Plastic tags are preferred for animals that require shearing. If metal tags are used the preferred placement is in the left ear, about a third of the way down from the head – where it is more visible and easier to keep out of the way when shearing. This reduces the risk of the tag being struck by the shears and potentially damaging the headpiece or injuring the animal or the operator. For young lambs, leave enough space for growth by leaving one-third of the tag overhanging the edge of the ear.

Official tags may not be sold or given to another person. If you no longer need the tags, they should be destroyed or returned to the APHIS Veterinary Services District Field Office for your state. Locations for field offices can be found online at:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/contact-us>

### **Approved Tag Manufacturers**

APHIS has approved several companies to manufacture and sell official devices, including tags and injectable transponders. Producers should consider the different devices available—including metal or plastic tags, radio frequency identification (RFID) tags, RFID implants (there are restrictions on the use of implants\*\*)—and choose what works best for them. For the list of approved tag manufacturers, visit [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie) (click on “Sheep and Goat Identification” from the list at the bottom of the page).

### **Tattooing**

Registered animals may be identified with a registration tattoo instead of a tag, as long as the animal is accompanied by a copy of the registration certificate issued by an APHIS-approved registry listing the current owner or the registration certificate and a completed transfer of ownership form dated within 60 days that lists the current owner. If the registry you use is not approved, you can still use your tattoos if you provide your tattoo prefix and registry to APHIS for inclusion in your flock record and include a copy of your confirmation email or letter with the animal.

In addition, the flock identification number assigned by APHIS may be tattooed (along with an individual animal number) to officially identify sheep or goats that are not registered. If you have a registered herd prefix, you may request that APHIS assign it as part of your flock identification number.

Tattoos may not be used as the sole form of official ID for animals moving to slaughter or through a livestock market. \*\*\*

Owners must ensure the legibility of tattoos. Owners should also be prepared to assist with the tattoo reading process, including using a flashlight or other light source to assist with reading when animals are inspected.

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\*\* For more details on the restrictions on the use of implants and tattoos see the NSEP Standards at [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie)

\*\*\* For a list of approved registries see the list at [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie)

## **Recordkeeping**

Records must be kept for five years after the animal is sold or otherwise disposed. Ideally, producers should keep records in an electronic format, such as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. You must record the following information:

### When you apply official ID:

- The flock ID number of the flock of origin, the name and address of the person who currently owns the animals, and the name and address of the owner of the flock of origin, if different;
- The name and address of the owner of the flock of birth, if known, for animals born in another flock and not already identified to flock of birth;
- The date the animals were officially identified;
- The number of sheep and the number of goats identified;
- The breed and class (i.e. cull ewes, feeder lambs, breeding does etc.) of the animals. If breed is unknown, for sheep the face color and for goats the type (milk, fiber, or meat) must be recorded instead;
- The official ID numbers\*\*\*\* applied to animals by species or the Group Identification Number (GIN) applied in the case of a group/lot;
- Whether the animals were identified with “Slaughter Only” or “MEAT” identification devices; and
- Any GIN with which the animal was previously identified.

### When you buy or sell animals:

- The number of animals purchased, sold, or transferred without sale;
- The date of purchase, sale, or other transfer;
- The name and address of the person from whom the animals were purchased or otherwise acquired, or to whom they were sold or otherwise transferred;
- The species, breed, and class of animal, and if breed is unknown, for sheep the face color and for goats the type (milk, fiber, or meat) must be recorded instead;
- A copy of the brand inspection certificate for animals identified with registered brands or ear notches;
- A copy of any certificate or owner/hauler statement required for movement of the animals purchased, sold, or otherwise transferred.

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\*\*\*\* *The official identification number is the complete number on the official USDA sheep/goat tag, official tattoo, or approved RFID device. It is acceptable to list the first and last number in a sequential series, rather than each individual number.*

**More Information**

For more information about scrapie or the National Scrapie Eradication Program, please visit [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie).

If you have questions, contact the APHIS Veterinary Services Office for your State (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/contact-us>)

or your State Animal Health Office

([http://www.usaha.org/upload/Federal%20and%20State%20Health/StateAnimalHealthOfficials\\_rev.pdf](http://www.usaha.org/upload/Federal%20and%20State%20Health/StateAnimalHealthOfficials_rev.pdf)).